



NEWS RELEASE

LINCOLN-LANCASTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 3, 2010
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Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases Increasing in Lancaster County

The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department has investigated 18 cases of pertussis (“Whooping Cough”) in the past two months. A total of 24 lab confirmed cases have been reported so far in 2010. In 2009, a total of 20 cases of pertussis were reported. Four of the cases in the past 2 months were in infants under one year of age, two of whom were hospitalized.

Currently, several states are reporting an increase in whooping cough cases, including a state-wide epidemic in California. It is important that individuals make sure both they and their loved ones are up to date with vaccinations. This includes pertussis containing vaccines, DTaP vaccine for infants and children and Tdap booster for adolescents and adults. Beginning this school year in Nebraska, all students entering seventh grade are required to have had a Tdap booster immunization.

Infants do not typically begin the four dose series of immunizations against pertussis until two months of age. Children who are younger than seven years of age should have received at least

five doses of pertussis vaccine (DTaP vaccine). Parents are strongly encouraged to be sure their children are current on all immunizations and that every effort is made to begin and continue infant immunizations on time. Parents who are unsure of their child's immunization status should contact their health care provider or the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8065.

Pertussis vaccines are very effective but not 100% effective. With pertussis circulating in the community, there is still a chance that a fully vaccinated person can catch this very contagious disease. When you or your child develops a cold that includes a prolonged or severe cough, it may be pertussis

Dr. Bruce Dart, Health Director, urged parents with children under one year of age to avoid taking them to places that have large crowds of people and keep them away as much as possible from anyone who has cold symptoms or is coughing.

Pertussis can cause serious illness in infants, children and adults. The disease starts like the common cold, with runny nose or congestion, sneezing, and maybe mild cough or fever. But after 1–2 weeks, severe coughing begins. Infants and children with the disease may cough violently and rapidly, over and over, until the air is gone from their lungs and they're forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound. Pertussis is most severe for babies; more than half of infants less than 1 year of age who get the disease must be hospitalized. About 1 in 5 infants with pertussis get pneumonia (lung infection), and about 1 in 100 will have convulsions. In rare cases (1 in 100), pertussis can be deadly, especially in infants.

A person with pertussis usually will spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by parents, older siblings, or other caregivers who might not even know they have the disease.

Pertussis is highly contagious during the first 2-3 weeks of coughing. Antibiotics are used to treat both the infected individual and all household contacts, regardless of their immunization status. Contacts outside the home that are symptomatic should be evaluated by their healthcare provider.

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